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LETTERS OF GENERAL HENRY LEE.

(VIRGINIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY MSS. COLLECTIONS.)

The following letters were addressed by the famous "Light Horse Harry" to Governor Reed, of Pennsylvania:

My dear Sir:

The period is at length arrived when I must move for the southern army. Want of cash detains us for a day—tomorrow we are to review; the day following we march. As we pass thro. the city, I mean to gratify myself with a personal adieu. But my feelings command me to separate with more solemnity. Therefore I honor & please myself with wishing you in writing every public success & private felicity. I do it, not only from my individual attachment, but, sir, because I rate you as one of the instruments selected by providence to extricate this unhappy country from its very pressing embarrassments.

I have the honor to be with singular attachment & respect your ob. sevt.

HENRY LEE, Gen'l.

Philad^b, May 17th, '80.

Advanced post, June 20th, '80.

My dear sir:

Since my junction, which was the second day after we passed Philad^e, every measure with us seemed to be in consequence of something from them. The arrival of S^r Henry from Charlestown has urged us to motion. The main body of the army under his Excellency decamped last night, pointing its march toward the N. River. A secondary body remains in this country. Gen. Greene commands. My corps continue here, & with a detachment of Infantry form the advance. On my reaching the army, I was immediately ordered to the front, & honored with the command on the lines. In consequence of which line of life, I know the springs of action in both armies. Be assured that the enemy conduct themselves with much wisdom. Not only their movements are material & military, but their positions

are circumspect, & their discipline rigid. A very different chief Mr. Clinton from S^r Will. Howe. They have made two fruitless excursions on my post; we have made prisoners one Lt. & his party—every day we kill, & are killed.

I have proposed this day to make an attempt on Mr. Kinsihäusen with three hund^d men. My object is to bring off a picquet, & oblige Mr. Kinsihäusen either to extend his picquets or to contract his lines. His caution has worked so far on him, as to induce him to proximate his picquets to his camp, least the former might be taken off. I am now speaking of his right flank—his left is secured by the Elizabeth town creek; it is on his left I mean to strike seriously, & to storm his right. The alarm on his right I expect will shew him the impropriety of having his picquets so near his lines, as it is certain that in such a position his army is liable to surprize. He will therefore extend his picquets on his right; if he does, the prosecution of my plan orders them to be cut off at some opportune moment. This being done, he will necessarily contract his lines, or reinforce his army.

Either of these objects will be very important to us; the first liberates E. town, the second prevents any important movement in another quarter.

How this reasoning will relish I doⁿ know; I fear the general will not consent because it might produce the loss of 20 or 30 lives in the operation of the plan.

But done with these matters; I cannot but express my happiness in the movement taking place toward the N. river.

The enemy are about one third superior to us in number; wisdom on our side will effectually prevent any injury to us; the succour we expect from our Countrymen will give us in time the ability of offence. In the interim, while the main body prepares a position capable of relieving W. point if beseiged, or of striking on the enemy's right should they advance on Gen^l Greene, we shall be safe. The moment we lay und^r cover of the mountains in one body, the enemy will possibly hurt us by their manœuvres. This let^r is all in hurry. I should not have wrote, only because of my wishes to add to the gratification of a gentleman who struggles with such ardor & wisdom pro bono publico.

May your efforts be properly seconded. We look to you & your State.

I have the honor to be your friend & ser.

HENRY LEE, Gen'l.

Stony Point, July 18th '79,
11 O'clock at Night.

Dear Sir:

I wrote your Excellency by Mr. Gordon, since which the object which has engaged our attention from the commencement of the campaign is no more.

Previous to this an official account of the enterprize on the night of the 15th might have reached Congress. For your satisfaction I furnish the particulars.

Early on the morning of the 15th I received orders from General Wayne to join the Light Infantry with my Corps. The general was so polite as to shew me his disposition of attack, & as my station was the post of intelligence, he also consulted with me on the lines of approach.

The right column und. the command of Gen. Wayne took the route along the beach, crossed the morass up to their knees in mud & water & moved on the enemy' left.

Col. Butler commanded our left column & made his way thro' the marsh over the relicts of the bridge altho' the passage was very difficult & defended by a work in twenty yds. of it. A feint was made in the center. My corps of infantry annexed pro tem only, followed on in the rear of the two columns, as a reserve.

The troops rushed forward with a vigor hardly to be paralleled & with a silence which would do honor to the first veterans on earth. A spirit of death or victory animated all ranks. Gen. Wayne has gained immortal honor, he received a slight wound, one proof that providence decreed him every laurel in her gift. Every other officer acquired fame proportionate to his opportunity. The storm was more rapid than can be conceived & in fifteen minutes works were carried with the loss only of eleven killed on the spot, which every officer engaged reckoned could be purchased by the sacrifice of nothing less than every third man. Lt.-Col. Fleary led on the right, Major Stewart the left.

Capt. Lawson & Lt. Gibbons who conducted the vans of the columns, distinguished themselves by their valor & coolness.

We captured the whole garrison excepting a few who got off in boats. One hundred of them were killed & wounded, four hundred & forty four inclusive of eighteen officers have marched on toward Lancaster. The humanity of the Americans perhaps never was more conspicuous than on this occasion.

Altho. from the repeated cruelties of the enemy exercised on our countrymen, known by all & felt by many, from the nature of assaults by storm & particularly in the dead of night, yet I can venture to affirm, the moment a surrender was announced the bayonet was laid aside.

The British officers are candid enough to declare their gratitude for the lenity of their treatment.

May this fresh proof of the magnanimity of our soldiers tend to civilize our foe; if it does not, it must & will be the last.

Fifteen cannon, mortars, howitzers, &c. were found in the fort, an abundance of military stores & a quantity of baggage. The most valuable of these are safe; the rest are now burning. Some unfortunate accidents have prevented till too late the intended attack on Verplank's point. Genl Clinton is at hand & we have evacuated Stoney point.

I fear the consequences from this signal success will not be adequate to moderate expectations, our not possessing both sides has compelled us to relinquish the one; it is probable it will be repossessed by the British and of course our old position will be reassumed, a position which both policy & comfort conspire to reproach.

Tomorrow perhaps W. Clinton's intentions will begin to shew themselves. Should any thing turn up & I should be among the fortunates, you may expect to hear from me, provided you assure me that my hasty, incorrect epistles are not disagreeable.

I have long wished my Corps was legionary. The event of the 15th makes me more anxious on this head. His Excellency has been pleased to flatter me with Mr. Clane's incorporation. It is now before Congress. I shall be very unhappy if it does not succeed as the mode of carrying on the war now renders infantry absolutely necessary for the accomplishment of any thing clever. I wish you would think of me on this occasion. Two

companies of Infantry besides Mr. Clanes are now und. my command; but as it is but a temporary annexion, I conceive it useless to establish the police most advantageous to Partizan officers, & do not therefore receive their full use. Please make my most respectful compliments to your Lady & believe me to be with great sincerity,

Your aff. hum. serv^t,

HENRY LEE, Gen^l.

Easton, 6th August, '80.

Dear sir:

When I wrote your Excellency last, I had not received my particular instructions, & only knew what I then expressed.

On the 3d, General Greene's orders, enclosing a warrant for the impress of such a number of waggons as the transportation of ordinance, military stores & provision from Easton & Sussex county might render necessary, reached me. Since which, I have been engaged in waiting on the Magistrates of this county. I have experienced from them the utmost zeal, & yesterday the quotas of the several townships were fixed for the furnishing one hund^d four horse waggons, including the eleven already in service. I have made a requisition for the same number from Berks, & flatter myself my application to the Magistrate will meet with equal success. Tomorrow I mean to move into Burk county, where I shall also require one hund. waggons. My requisition will extend to the upper part of the county only. Having accomplished this business, I then rejoin the army. My efforts in Jersey are successful, so much so that probably the Berks teams will not have objects for employ on this route. Of this I shall be able to inform more accurately toward the close of my business. In the execution of my orders, I have as yet been only in the service of the Magistrate. No occurrence will influence me to act otherwise, unless something remarkable, and then I shall follow the advice of the people.

In my last to your Excellency on the subject of existence to my corps, I stated the just claims of my officers.

I did it with candor & respect, nor do I see where or how it was exceptionable. I continue to think that the Pensylvanian officers under me have the same right to their proportion of the

draughts as the officers of the P. Division. I might be satisfied with the answer the council has been pleased to give me. I have but one way to redress myself, & I presume my countrymen will justify me in so doing, when they know that I conceived it injurious to honor to serve in an army where distinctions were established, repugnant to that equality which by compact was the basis of the American service. I cannot be happy when I am told you may draw support to your body, but shall not command your proportion of men.

The small number due from this state can advantage us but little; of course it is not the loss of the men so much as the establishment of the principle which hurts me. Other States I suppose will treat us in the same manner, & at the close of this campaign my small corps will be reduced to a mere party. However, I have learnt the art of being happy under distress. I have done my duty so far as I know how, faithfully. My letters to the several governments will shew my officers my endeavors to procure soldiers for them, & my conscience will acquit me if forced to relinquish a command I most sincerely love.

I have the honor to be, sir, with the most perfect respect & esteem your Excellency's most ob. serv.

HENRY LEE, Gen'l.

His Exc^d Joseph Reid, yd.

LETTERS OF WILLIAM FITZHUGH.

July 21st, 1698.

Mr. Cornelius Serjeant:

Sr. I received severall letters from you last year & the last by Capt. Jones wt. acct. of sales acct. Curr^t inclosed therein, the acct. of Sales of my Tobo. I do not at all like, for I must esteem you by your letters & the sales there made to be but a very ordinary Market man, for if all the Tobo. I had sold about that time which was not inconsiderable, both at Bristol, London, Plymouth, & Liverpool, ordinary Tobo. yielded me as good & some a better price, my own stemmed sweet scented so far beyond, that I have